

**Tourism Workforce Assessment Forum**  
**Lake Havasu City**  
**May 18, 2005**

**Discussion Topic 1: Recruitment, Retention And Succession**

**What non-traditional strategies do you use to recruit entry-level employees?**

- It's a little different in Havasu than in other areas, we don't have a tremendous unemployment rate. It's a problem finding people to take the positions. There's not a lot of jobs out there. Especially entry-level, so creative recruitment is a necessity
- One thing we do is profile the type of person we want and start with that and put ads in the papers, in Phoenix too. It's not always better to get someone with experience. We try to train someone. One thing I will do is post it here at the college. You go thru training, you go thru switchboard and get minimum wage. And we share with everyone what the ladder is to get up it and make more money. The salaries are an open book.
- I think he touched on it, we have to go out of our market—Laughlin, Vegas, Kingman—to recruit. I don't know that it's effective, but it gives us more bodies to interview. I have pulled good employees that weren't in Havasu.
- At Havasu Resort Dunes we've had a position for a night auditor for over a month and we've received lots of people picking up applications, but only received two applications for the job. We've relied on labor express in town, 90 percent of our employees come through them. They are a temp agency.

**What non-traditional strategies do you use to recruit management employees?**

- It's a cut throat business here. I see more upper level. There's a lot of stealing and cross movement here. Cooks are at a premium here. It's more retention than trying to find them.
- There's lot of mid-manager movement.
- Either try to fill positions with lateral movement (bringing employees in with experience) or moving them up within organizations. It's an even work up the ladder.
- That's the innovative part. Lake Havasu is a special, unique place. That's a selling point. It's great for recruiting. So we sell the location as a perk.
- We've been blessed with our organization. We have 37 employees, only 4 have been there less than 5 years, it speaks a lot for people looking for work. We've lost most to retirement but they come back.

**Besides wages, what factors contribute to employee turnover?**

- Inadequate training. People generally work for a manager, not a company. So there's a lot of turnover
- How you treat the employee, the atmosphere. We have fun, we have a job, but I treat them with respect, we try to develop a team concept, with flex schedules and caring and offering something other than money.
- Our General Manager has developed such a friendly work environment and that's a GM's dream.
- Working schedule needs change. One downfall is that you want the ladder to success, but our employees stay so long that's its hard to give them that ladder. Our circumstance, most need to relocate and most don't want to move.
- Hire young people that decide that they want to go to school. So continuing ed. A large part of our work force is kids out of school, so we know it's a short-term thing, but we try to train them and utilize them. It's hard.

**What are you doing/could you do to attract young people to consider a career in the tourism industry?**

- We need to get more involved in job fairs
- We could do something with local high school to do something with them to develop the synergy. This campus doesn't have a hospitality program. People go to big city for school and fall in love with that. It's hard to come back
- A lot of people have this stereotype for what these jobs are. Need to change the perception of what the jobs are
- The perception is also low level and minimum wage. But it's a huge spectrum there's so much available
- Need to start exposing them at 16 or freshman year of school. Technical training at 16 but personality training at kindergarten
- I have a young couple that is married and works for us. They want to cross train and learn everything they can in these departments with a goal to teach this business to their family in Hawaii. They are taking classes here [at the college to supplement this training]
- *If someone comes to you with a degree in hospitality will you pay them more?*
- Me? Possibly, depends on person. In the kitchen, absolutely.

**How are you preparing employees for advancement in your organization?**

- We're cross training all employees in different areas. Front desk, accounting, reservations...it's just more of an opportunity to move and more skills to acquire
- If some of our managers are taking courses at the college, we'll pay for it. If they get an "A", we'll pay for it; if they get a "D" they pay for it. Last semester we had our patrol taking courses
- We brought in some trainers with all of our supervising staff for a couple of days. It was informative and we saw some benefit from it with interpersonal skills. We want to bring more training on site for that
- We're just trying to get enough employees to stay that we're not planning for advancement
- We give free training to our wait staff through Cisco, to teach them skills like wine-bottle opening, or leadership development courses through the chamber. Overall this training is good. You need to bring someone in from the outside; it is different when an outsider comes in to train than if we do it in-house
- Empower your staff at every level...even the maid. I empower employees by giving them more responsibility and letting them think for themselves.
- People want to be acknowledged

**Are there jobs that a guest worker program would be especially well-suited to fill?**

- I think we have a unique situation. Someone is staffing kitchens and doing maid work. It's not the high schoolers. We have a quiet Mexican population and it is becoming quite large. But they are taking these jobs that need filling. Line cooks are desperately needed. Carpenters, landscapers...
- These people have great work ethic and put passion into their work.
- We don't have much of a problem with this. Lots of Hispanics, but this area welcomes diversity
- The nature of our business requires communication with guests and that's probably my biggest issue is them talking effectively with guests

## **Discussion Topic 2: Industry Trends**

**How do changing travel preferences affect your workforce and training needs?**

- Consumers are more independent and are more seasoned and demand more. This increases costs by what we offer including services. Customer service ratings have decreased. We put everything at people's fingertips and need to continue to do so
- People want golf arrangements made. They rely on us more than ever before. Now it requires more from staff—a lot more. A lot more interaction and reliance, and our employees experience that during the interview
- That's interesting, not everyone has that. Some properties are specialized in dealing with those people. There's a lot of that service missing all around. Even at grocery stores and at AMPM, we all have to sell our city or these people will go away
- Our customers have researched their destination a lot more than before whether through the internet or talking to others. They know what's available to them in the community. When they ask, they expect hospitality people to have the answers. We aren't do a great job training our people, as evident through a recent training event we had and we had employees come to us saying they learned 15 new things
- We have a problem with down times; we need to bridge 4 months. It's hard to retain employees during down time and we lose lots of good people

**What other social trends (cultural, environmental, political, economic, demographic, etc.) do you anticipate impacting your industry?**

- Local politics with the channel is impactful. Our visitors, because they know stuff through research and friends, they always know there is controversy so they seek alternate solutions
- If the bridge closes down, we lose a lot of business. So we need to find other activities to get people here otherwise we lose a lot of business
- We've all learned to be more flexible, be a chameleon, so to speak, to what is going on... I lost my train of thought. We change with our environment around us to survive. This industry is more so than others

**What new jobs are emerging in your company or industry?**

- License massage therapists, reflexologist, giving more on-site so as not to lose them to other businesses
- IT people. Internet access in a lot of rooms
- Electronic media is a new place we need FT position. To send out 10K people ...its database management. Our Director of Sales handled that, but now we've got so many computers so we have new positions to meet our needs

**Over the next five years, what jobs and job skills areas are being phased out from your company or industry?**

- Not sure. We haven't gotten that far
- We're a very unique area, we're doing OK. We have lean times, but we're developing. Service is everything. To our last question, I'm surprised we haven't seen an all-inclusive resort here. With all the services and such. A cruise director for the hotel. We need someone to keep the spirit going. Like a concierge. People like that
- This good attitude is contagious. And good PR
- Our guests that they don't like stuffy resorts, they want human experiences

#### **What impact will aging of workforce have on staffing in your industry?**

- It's working for us. Four of our security guards are 66. Having aged workers is awesome; they are working because they want to work not because they have to. They are looking for something that is easy and fun. We've had success with this.
- Our elderly guests love it too. It's not always great to have the young faces
- As our employees get older, because of our limited workforce, and many leave to experience something other than Havasu, and while that can hurt our community, it's the younger ones aging that hurts us
- This industry is not known for great insurance and retirement benefits
- The older workforce, they are going to be retiring, and no one is taking their place. We have to create educational programs that will make a difference. You can't insult people with smiles. Programs that have meat to it. No one knows how to get a sponsorship or event planning, or golf events, etc.

#### **What intergenerational issues affect your workforce?**

- We have ages 19-72 in our housekeeping department. There's no friction, sometimes I think the older people can work circles around the younger ones. And the older ones mentor the younger ones, and the younger ones keep the older ones young. It just happened...
- Havasu is a kick back place, its going to flow
- They all feed off each other. It's when it's the same age group, there's the cliques and such, but we don't see that here
- I think a lot of our work force and part of our future business is helping us be more responsive. They help with PR to their friends. So it's also community advertising.
- Folks that come in find it encouraging to see such a wide range of ages. It also helps us be flexible to meet customers' needs

### **Discussion Topic 3: Staff Development & Training**

#### **What are you currently doing to train and update the skills of your employees?**

- I found that our hands-on orientation is more effective. Things always change, so we like to do recurrent training every month or so and it's probably a good idea. It refreshes them on what we have
- Constantly keeping them up-to-date on industry news. We're rolling out a program with our employees called MAGIC, **M**aking **A** **G**ood **I**mpression on **C**ustomers. It's ongoing and we'll do it every day. Teaching and coaching everyday. It's been a huge success with management. It came down from Sundown (?) and they saw it worked with sales staff
- We also train and we've lost that animosity so we're really getting the team working together. And cross training and exposure to all parts of the business
- We use a lot of Ramada programs to train our people. It's five letters and as they achieve these things, they get perks. There are some incentives—financial and recognition too

#### **What educational partnerships does your organization currently have, and how could these be improved?**

- We did the customer service training through MCC and I thought it was a big plus
- So did we
- We've been discussing doing language training for a variety of industries. And we're taking part in it.
- We had a girl from ASU doing an internship, but she was receiving training and she had to do training. It was a different mentality and that worked out for us
- We do the same thing. We try to bring someone internationally or nationally and have them go through the different departments. It's great for everyone because they get curious and it's good for the spirit
- [MCC] has a program to prepare people as line chefs and culinary programs. It's in Bullhead City and we have a converted student center for culinary students. We've trained two different groups for casinos and restaurants. There's all sorts of things... businesses have picked 2 or 3 people and get them in school and they are prepared
- It's in Bullhead because the casinos really spearheaded it. So we can expand on it here
- We could benefit from such programs and we need greater awareness for programs that exist

**What needs do you or your customers have that you are unable to meet because your employees don't have the necessary skills?**

- Lack of knowledge of customer service skills. A lot of people didn't show for this [forum] that should have and I'm disappointed about it. This is a hospitality town
- Staff hasn't experienced what customers are experiencing.
- Marriot empowers employees to do what they need to do to get customer services

**What can be done to help prepare younger members of the workforce to appropriately service the needs of your customers?**

- Training, technology, what they are doing, how to react, constructive criticism. We have to teach by example
- Experiences are both in town and at other properties and both in our experiences and managerial experience
- We need program in common sense
- Young people at 7 or 8 they have formed their personality. A lot of children are not being taught manners and common sense
- Lots of life skills development
- It's not a simple matter of training, people need people skills. Stress management, priorities, time management, multi-tasking, cultural sensitivity

**What can be done to help aging members of the workforce to appropriately service the needs of your customers?**

- Older people need patience. We hear a lot of people saying, I would never have gotten away with that at that age
- My security guys get nervous when they see a lot of kids. It is patience and coaching them. It's manners and discipline that parents aren't giving kids
- Not really
- I saw something in Portland, Oregon; the hotel had a great respect for employees. A gal in her mid-70s was working breakfast, lunch and dinner. We thought, whoa...but they gave her flexibility. Also, the hotel employees rewarded each other. It can inspire them. Recognition. We have to recognize our people
- A lot of people who work with us who are greatly under-employed. I try to treat these people like humans. There are a lot of people looking for work so they'll do anything

**How will technology affect your staff training and development capacity?**

- These classes being offered are incentive to get people to stay here. Computer classes when you have an employee who is computer challenged. We pay for them to get trained. This is great
- Any Internet training or anything like that. We do at the resort, but it's more towards a specific group
- We have signature training. With phones and other things we offer like guest services. We monitor phone calls and use that information to improve our services
- We had our employees get together to talk about their jobs and this group enjoyed hearing other perspectives of the work
- We need to keep up with technology. It's important that we stay on top of that, all systems are more advanced. If we want to compete, we have train